

Message Text

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM TOON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, LE

SUBJECT: ALLON ON THE LEBANESE SITUATION

1. I CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER ALLON ON JULY 12 TO INFORM HIM OF MY RETURN TO WASHINGTON ON JULY 15 FOR CONSULTATIONS AND TO EXCHANGE VIEWS ON THE CURRENT MIDDLE EAST SCENE. (ALSO PRESENT WERE DIRECTOR GENERAL AVINERI, DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL EVRON, DIRECTOR NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION RAVIV AND HASSIN, POLITICAL ADVISER.)

2. ALLON DEVOTED MOST OF HIS PRESENTATION ON THE LEBANESE SITUATION TO AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN MILITARY POSITION AND POLITICAL OBJECTIVES. RECENT EVENTS, HE SAID, HAD JUSTIFIED HIS OPTIMISM ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN ABILITY TO FIGHT BACK AS HAD BEEN SHOWN BY THEIR GREAT VICTORY AGAINST THE TWO PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMPS IN SOUTHEAST BEIRUT. JUMBLATT AND ARAFAT HAD HAD TO APPEAL TO THE ARAB NATIONS TO HELP THEM; BUT IT APPEARED THAT NO ARAB STATE AT THIS STAGE WAS INTERESTED IN COMING TO THEIR AID. ON THE MILITARY FRONT, ALLON FELT THAT THE SYRIANS AND THE CHRISTIANS WOULD NOW TRY TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR HOLD ON BEIRUT AND IN GENERAL CONCENTRATE ON THE COASTAL AREAS IN WHICH THE CHRISTIANS HAVE A DEMOGRAPHIC MAJORITY. ALLON QUICKLY REVIEWED THE CURRENT FIGHTING SITUATION AROUND TRIPOLI AND BAALBEK. HE SAID THAT HE EXPECTED THE FIGHTING

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TO GO ON INDEFINITELY WITH THE CHRISTIANS TRYING TO FIRM UP

THEIR CONTROL OVER ALL THOSE AREAS IN WHICH THEY HAVE A MAJORITY.

3. IN ASSESSING THE POLITICAL SITUATION, ALLON SAID THAT IN HIS VIEW THERE WAS NO HOPE OF RESTORING ANY PEACE IN LEBANON UNLESS THE MARONITE CHRISTIANS ENJOY THEIR OWN AUTONOMY WITHIN A FEDERAL STRUCTURE ON THE SWISS MODEL. FOR THE SECURITY OF ISRAEL AND THAT OF THE ENTIRE WEST IT WOULD BE BETTER TO HAVE A MARONITE COMMUNITY IN LEBANON WITH CONSIDERABLE AUTONOMY, RATHER THAN A UNIFIED STATE. THE SYRIANS WOULD PREFER A UNIFIED SOLUTION BUT THEY MIGHT EVENTUALLY AGREE TO A FEDERAL ARRANGEMENT. THE GREAT DANGER, ALLON CONTINUED, WAS THAT IF THE CHRISTIANS DID NOT FEEL SECURE WITH THEIR OWN AUTONOMOUS ENTITY AFTER THE FIGHTING ENDED, MOST OF THEM WOULD LEAVE LEBANON. THEN THERE WOULD BE A MOSLEM STATE UNDER EITHER DIRECT OR INDIRECT SYRIAN CONTROL. THERE HAVE ALREADY BEEN ABOUT 28,000 CASUALTIES AND 500,000 PEOPLE HAVE LEFT LEBANON. IT WAS DIFFICULT TO CONCEIVE OF A UNITED LEBANON AGAIN AFTER SUCH BLOODLETING.

4. ALLON FELT THAT THE SYRIAN/CHRISTIAN/ALLIANCE WAS ONLY TEMPORARY. THE SYRIANS WERE MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH THE LEFTIST LEADERSHIP THROUGH JALLOUD. THE MAIN CHRISTIAN LINK WITH THE SYRIANS IS THROUGH THE FALANGISTS. UNFORTUNATELY, THE CHRISTIANS DO NOT HAVE A UNIFIED COMMAND; THEY SIMPLY COORDINATE THEIR ACTIONS. THE MARONITES HAVE LITTLE REGARD FOR EITHER FRANGIE OR SARKIS, AND IN FACT CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP ON THE POLITICAL LEVEL, AS ON THE MILITARY LEVEL, IS ALMOST COMPLETELY LACKING.

5. I TOLD ALLON THAT WE FELT ISRAELI HANDLING OF THE LEBANESE CRISIS IN MOST RESPECTS, INCLUDING ITS HUMANITARIAN ACTIONS ON THE BORDER AS WELL AS ITS POSTURE OF RESTRAINT, WAS CONSTRUCTIVE AND COMMENDABLE. ALLON REPLIED THAT HE THOUGHT THE THREE GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE RABIN GOVERNMENT WERE SINAI II, THE HANDLING OF THE LEBANESE CRISIS AND THE ENTEBBE RESCUE OPERATION (SEPTTEL).
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